

Charles B. Vaughan to Andrew Jackson, July 14, 1833, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

SIR CHARLES R. VAUGHAN TO JACKSON.1

1 Sir Charles R. Vaughan was the British minister in Washington. In transmitting his letter for Jackson to Van Buren for delivery July 14, 1833, he said:

"I saw Major Eaton last night and I think that he expressed himself glad, that the report was at last contradicted. God knows what foolish orders may have been found issued by Regimental officers but it is clear that Sir Ed: Pakenham never issued the General Order, attributed to him. Don't forget that I expect to see yourself and the Major at 5 O'Clock tomorrow."

Private

Washington, July 14, 1833.

Dear Sir, I beg permission to divest myself of my public character, while I address you privately, in consequence of a communication which I have received from the British Officers who served upon the Staff of the Army commanded by the late General Sir Edward Pakenham at the Battle of New Orleans on the 8th Jan'y 1815.

In a Book of Travels through the United States, published in England by Mr Stuart, it is asserted, that the British Commander in Chief had promised the plunder of New Orleans to his Army, and on the authority of Major Eaton's Memoirs, that "Beauty and Booty" was the watchword of the British Army on that day.

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The surviving Staff-Officers engaged in that Battle, conceiving that an imputation may be inferred from this assertion, injurious to the memory of their distinguished commander, whose long and glorious career of military service was closed by his death on that day, have transmitted to me a paper, signed by them denying positively that any order of the tenor asserted was issued by Sir Edward Pakenham and it should be recollected that through these Staff Officers, alone, could any orders be issued from the Head-Quarters of the Army.

Encouraged by the fearless openness of Character which distinguishes you, I take the liberty of placing in your hands, the denial of the officers upon the Staff of that Expedition. I am sure that it will at once rescue the British Commander from the imputation of having promised the plunder of New Orleans to his Troops and of having given out the Watchword of "Beauty and Booty", which seems to have had its origin in the construction put upon papers found upon a prisoner, and which I regret to find, has remained so long uncontradicted.²

² In order to get definite information on the American side of the matter, Jackson wrote to Gen. William Carroll for his recollections (p. 131, *post*). Carroll could not remember what had happened. It is to be regretted that his reply has not been preserved. See his letter to Jackson Aug. 9, 1833, in which he speaks of an earlier reply, which is lost.

The paper mentioned by Sir Charles Vaughan in this letter was signed by Lieut.-Gens. John Lambert and John Keane, Maj.-Gens. William Thornton and Edward Blakeney, and Col. Alexander Dickson. Their statement was as follows:

"The two following Paragraphs extracted from a work recently published entitled 'Three Years in North America, by James Stuart Esqre': when speaking of the Expedition to New Orleans in 1815, express 1st: 'It has been said and never contradicted, as far as I have heard, that the British Commander in Chief had promised the plunder of New Orleans to his Army' 2ndly. 'Mr. Eaton holding one of the highest Offices in the General Government

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of the United States, the present (1830) Secretary at War of the American Government at Washington, and Author of the Life of General Jackson, expressly asserts that "Beauty and Booty" was the Watchword of Sir Edward Pakenham's Army on the battle of 8th January 1815.'

"Now We the Undersigned serving in that Army, and actually present, and through whom all orders to the Troops were promulgated, do, in justice to the memory of that distinguished Officer who commanded and led the attack, the whole tenour of whose life was marked by Manliness of Purpose and Integrity of View, most Unequivocally deny that any such promise was ever held out to the Army, or that the Watchword, asserted to have been given out, was ever issued, and further that such motives could never have actuated the Man who, in the discharge of his duty to His King and Country so eminently upheld the character of a true British Soldier.

"That a refutation of the above calumnies not having before appeared is solely to be attributed to their not having Come to the knowledge of the Undersigned that they existed, until the work from which they are taken was given to the Public, in the present year, 1833."

I am with the most profound respect and the greatest personal esteem

your most faithful and obedient Servant